

critical digest

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T. M. MRAUS

NEWSLETTER SERVICES

Nov 2, 1953 Vol VI No 9 \$10 Year \$25 3 years The NYC Theatre Newsletter

New York Theatre Diary

The Trip to Bountiful-Miller 11/3/53. Theatre Guild & Fred Coe present Horton Foote's drama about an old lady who wants to make a final trip to her home town. Lillian Gish, Gene Lyons, Eva Marie Saint and Jo Van Fleet are featured in adaptation of Foote's NBC TV play...Kind Sir-Alvin 11/4/53. Josh Logan presents all star production with Charles Boyer and Mary Martin in Norman Krasna's comedy concerning a love affair between an actress and a State Department official...The Solid Gold Cadillac-Belesco 11/5/53. Max Gordon presents George S. Kaufman & Howard Teichmann comedy about the problems of a small investor in a large company. Cast includes Josephine Hull, Loring Smith and Mary Welch, Kaufman directed.

Current Theatre Reviews

Gently Does It- Playhouse 10/28/53. English murder play by Janet Green won 3 pro reviews from the NY daily critics, but the majority filed con notices for diverse reasons. Chapman, News, Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, and Sheaffer, Eagle recommended the George Ross- Edward Choate production to mystery play fans as a well acted, well constructed product. Anthony Oliver and Brenda Bruce, both making their Broadway debuts, were cheered by all the critics. Dissenters also agreed that many of the smaller parts were well played. Atkinson, Times, blamed script's failure on excess of small talk in latter half. While Kerr, Herald Tribune, believes author tried to sustain the twists in the plot for too long. Though Coleman, Mirror, reported that the first nighters enjoyed it, he personally thought it much too gentle. Watts, Post, listed it as minor homicide. McClain, Journal American, thought the ending too confused.

A Girl Can Tell- Royale 10/29/53. News and Mirror reviewers approved the new F. Hugh Herbert comedy starring Janet Blair in her first non-musical Broadway role. Former critic billed Aldrich & Myers production as a nice family type play with quite a few funny lines about sex, while latter called it a breezy, enjoyable comedy. But remainder of the critics did not find the comedy either funny or believable. A slatternly farce, panned Atkinson, Times. Hasn't the necessary flow of gayety and charm, adds Watts, Post, Herald Tribune and Journal American aisle sitters both felt Miss Blair was miscast in the leading role. Most of the reviewers were in agreement that the author had over extended himself on his "Kiss and Tell" type females. There was wide differences of opinions expressed on male members of the cast.

Sherlock Holmes- Century 10/30/53. In the face of split notices and no advance sales Bill Doll's production of Ouida Rathbone's script based on the famed detective character portrayed by husband Basil Rathbone, folded after 3 performances. Mirror, Journal American and Post critics filed mild pres, recommending the production to loyal Holmes fans. Though McClain, Journal American, feared others may be disappointed by the slightly confused plot. Atkinson, Times, summed up the "con" side by stating that the script was so cumbersome and uneven that Holmes himself would have regretted its untidiness. Kerr, Herald Tribune, feared that the mellow and imperturbable charm that might have made it a fond and foolish evening were missing. Most of cast were excused for trying hard to keep up with the plot. While Hawkins, WT&S noted that among the items missing in the proceedings were gallantry, ingenuity and fire.

 ' Village Theatre '

The Wedding Present, a new play by Ken Parker, opened Oct 30 at Royal Playhouse, 83 East 4th St. Rose Lynch and Ralph Lowe are producers. Play will run Thur To Sun with admission by voluntary contribution. ...Norman Lloyd will play the lead in Madam Will You Walk, which opens season at Phoenix Theatre Dec 1...That's Up, a new musical at the Provincetown, was panned by Shanley, Times, for having a sluggish book in which an uninspired idea is drawn out. Pat Hale, Winifred Ainslee and Jack Daboub were credited with reasonably melodious voices.

Moon in Capricorn, the second repertory production of D'Ancona-Hilliard at Theatre de Lys, won a mild "pro" notice from Atkinson, Times as an original fantasy with several absorbing scenes. Tani Seitz portrayal was especially recommended. A mild "con" was filed by Watts, Post, who found much of it interesting, but not enough. McClain, Journal American, frankly didn't understand what script was about. Others listed play as confused.

 ' Off- Broadway '

Equity Library Production of Shaw's The Philanderer has been cancelled. "Scrapbook" production of scenes of famous plays will be presented at Lenox Hill Nov 4-8...Equity Community Theatre series this season will present Detective Story, The Corn is Green, Hasty Heart and Kiss Me, Kate...Moliere's School for Wives will be presented by Long Island University Workshop Theatre Nov 6-8 at St. Felix St. Playhouse, Brooklyn

Othello, presented at Jan Hus House by Shakespeare Guild Festival Company was highly praised by Shanley, Times, as a note worthy beginning for the group. Earle Hyman plays a magnificent Moor. Show will be seen 5 times week for next 4 weeks, and will be followed Twelfth Night and Hamlet.

 ' Theatre Record Comments '

Decca's Merman-Martin disc cheered by Lewis, Cue, and Ackerman, Billboard. Latter notes Martin sings better, Merman louder.

 ' Theatre Book Comments '

"Some Enchanted Evenings", Deems Taylor's biography of Rodgers And Hammerstein (Harper) okayed by Abel, Variety and Sheaffer, Eagle. Former rated it an entertaining and affectionate document. While Eagle critic had reservations mainly because Taylor did not present analytical, revealing portraits of the 2 men.

"The Oliviers", Felix Barker's biography of the famed acting team (Lippincott) was recommended by Down, Variety as an exhaustive study of the subjects, plus a number of good illustrations

 ' Vaudeville '

Paramount will drop stage shows after next program which features Ames Bros, Pupi Campo Orchestra and Peiro Bros. House will install CinemaScope screen. Roxy dropped stage shows this year. 20th Century Fox is not allowing stage shows to be shown with any of their Cinemascope films.

 ' CD Services '

THEATRE NEWSLETTER weekly digests NYC theatre news, reviews, comments. Drama books, records. Critical reports, ticket reports. Ideal gift 52 weeks a year for every stage-struck fan, student, etc. Year round for 6th year. Compiled by BROADWAY IN BRIEF columnist. \$10 year, \$12.50 foreign. \$25 for 3 years includes free Merman-Martin disc.

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Name.....

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' Green Room Department '

OPEN WARFARE...Actors and producers shouldn't be shy in expressing their opinions to drama critics, Chapman, News, urged on WMCA Barry Gray. He personally wishes they would present points for argument. Critic also told that the reason he doesn't cover "Off-Broadway" productions is that he feels it is not fair to pick one or two for review. If you are to cover "Off Broadway", it would only be fair to cover all productions.

COLUMN TIPS...Lead of a hit musical on such a binge the past month that he is expected to fall onstage, hears Winchell...Gwen Verdon, Can-Can, being guarded as result of poison pen notes...Ladies of Corridor cast was prepared to take a pay cut, but show caught on, reports McCord, Herald Tribune.

MALE & FEMALE...Which are the more critical in a theatre audience, men or women? News' Inquiring Photographer asked this of several stars. Women were picked the most critical by Rosalind Russell, Robert Merrill, Shelia Bond and Victor Borge. While Celeste Holm thought men and women are equally critical. Females, points out Russell, have a higher emotional capacity and read more about theatre performances.

THEATRE ADS...Take A Giant Step is using suggestive ads, complains Winchell...Jose Ferrer misquoted Watts, Post, in quoting "great" for the actor's portrayal in The Shrike, the critic notes. Actual review called him "able"...Frogs of Spring ads featured "F.O.S" remedies and quizzes.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...It is un-American for stage producers to buy scripts by Communists who stand on the 5th Amendment and refuse to testify, states Eaton, Press...NY Drama Critics Circle plans to honor George Jean Nathan on his 80th birthday, states Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun...You can determine a hit when only a few straggle out after the final curtain, notes Sobol, Journal American.

TAX CUT FIGHT...If the theatre is to prosper and maintain its strength, it must be freed of the Federal Admissions tax, states "Theatre Arts" editorial. The magazine has set up a \$50,000 fund to wage a campaign to remove the tax which comes up for renewal in Congress in 1954...Watts, Post, believes that the publication has a point in feeling the stage deserves some help when the tax cuts are being dealt out.

' Broadway TV Theatre '

HASTY HEART, John Patrick's 1945 play of a lonely soldier who finds new friends, will be presented on "Broadway TV Theatre WORTV Nov 2-6 with John Dall and Hurd Hatfield. The play opened at the Hudson Theatre Jan 3, 1945 and played 207 performances. John Lund and Anne Burr were the leads in the Lindsay-Crouse production. Touching, moving

play agreed all but Rascoe, World-Telegram. He thought script was neither pleasurable or dramatic. Garland, Journal American, rated it tense, tough, tender. Kronenberger, PM, found it interesting, but only now and then compelling. Show has been a steady favorite in both summer stock and little theatre companies.

' Pros & Cons by TMK '

Broadway's 3 new plays of the week were all based in one way or another on the thought that they contained a commercial idea. The major objection of the dissenters

was that the scripts were not good enough to carry out the original ideas. Off Broadway tries, such as the original Moon in Capricorn are worth more to the theatre than the forementioned.

Broadway theatre this season has reclaimed the Belasco, the Longacre, the Avon, the Vanderbilt and the Mansfield theatres from TV. For the first time in years the number of theatres available for legitimate and musical productions has increased. This in spite of the razing of the beloved Empire Theatre.

But the theatre lost a potential house for musical comedies when it was announced this week that the 3000 seat Center Theatre at Rockefeller Center, would be razed in May 1954. A 19 story \$11 million office building will be erected. Except for the Sonja-Henie-Arthur Wirtz ice shows which ran at the house from 1940 to 1950, the theatre has never been a money maker. Recently NBC TV dropped its lease. The house opened in 1932 to show the "Animal Kingdom" film. Among the musicals which played at the house were American Way, The Great Waltz, and White Horse Inn.

Plays

The Little Hut closed after 29 performances...The Frogs of Spring closed after 15 performances. Ed Moroney subbed for Anthony Ross for 4 performances...Caine Mutiny Court Martial with Henry Fonda, John Hodiak and Lloyd Nolan opens at the Plymouth Jan 18...Columbe, the Jean Anouilh comedy adapted by Kronenberger, Time and starring Julie Harris, will open on Broadway Dec 31.

People

Paul Douglas will sub for Tom Ewell, Seven Year Itch, during latter's month long vacation...Louise Albritten is subbing for Neva Patterson, Seven Year Itch, during latter's 2 week vacation...Jobob IV, a stage trained goat, made his Broadway debut in Porgy and Bess, replacing Jobob III who was missing too many cues.

Theatre TV Notes

Maria Riva starts a new entertainment interview show on ABC TV Nov 2 at 6 30 EST Mon to Fri... "Life With Father" starts on CBS TV Nov 22 at 7 PM EST with Leon Ames and Lurene Tuttle...Premiere of Robert E. Sherwood's first TV play on NBC TV may be delayed due to a lack of sponsor... "Flamingo", written and acted by Steve Allen, will be presented on CBS TV Danger Nov 10. Comedian hopes to find investors to produce his script on Broadway.

Theatre Film Notes

"Top Banana" and "Kiss, Me Kate", both filmed in 3 D, will be presented in 2D... "The Tempest" will be produced in 3 D in England with Robert Helpmann...Ethel Merman is set for the lead in Columbia Pictures "Pal Joey"...Ibsen's "A Lady from the Sea" will be produced in Oslo by Beruth Lenboke, NY shippers.

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